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Parsonage of the Rev. Jacob R. Castner
Asbury, Warren County, New Jersey

HABS-NJ-699

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of New Jersey

Historic American Buildings Survey
Seymour Williams, F.A.I.A., District Officer
133 Central Avenue, Rahway, New Jersey

HABS
N.J.

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Parsonage of the Rev. Jacob R. Castner
Asbury, Warren County, New Jersey

Owner: (and occupant) Miss Laura M. Smith

Dates of Erection: Rear frame unit before 1815; front
brick unit 1815-1819; southeast addition
1846-1856

Architect: *

Builder: Elisha S. Warne, owner 1815-1819; southeast
addition by Augustus J. Richey, owner 1846-56

Present Condition: Original, well maintained. Front
porch added about 1870

Number of Stories: Two and one-half, over cellar

Materials of Construction:

Foundation - stone masonry
Exterior walls - brick for main house; frame
service wing and leanto at the rear
Interior walls - brick partywall and frame
partitions
Chimneys - brick, built inside of gable
end walls
Roof - gable, slate covered on main unit,
corrugated iron on minor unit; tin on
rear leanto and porches

Historical Data:

A search of title in the County records to
discover the identity of the original owner as above
stated is reported as follows:

* The blind arches in the facade suggest the domestic
work of Robert Mills, archt., 1781-1855, of Philadelphia.
See H.M.P. Gallagher, "Robert Mills, architect", publ.
1935 by Columbia University Press, N.Y.C., illustrated.

By deed of 1815, Robert C. Thomson and wife Maria of Mansfield Township, George Jones and wife Catharine, of Greenwich Township, both in Sussex (now Warren) County, and Adam Runkle and wife Sarah, of Lebanon Township, Hunterdon County, New Jersey, conveyed to Elisha Warne of the village of Asbury, in Mansfield Township, for \$350, a half acre lot in that village, "with all and singular the buildings, improvements" etc. The property lines were therein described as beginning at a stone or post at the northeast corner of the meeting house lot* thence along the line of land late of Daniel Hunt N. $23^{\circ} 30'$ W. 1.50 chains to a stake, a corner also of David Hunt's lot, thence S. $66\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ W. 3.35 to a stake in the Great Road (the main street through the village), thence along the road S. $23\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ E. 1.50 to a stake near the corner of the said meeting house lot, and along the line of that lot N. $66\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ E. 3.35 to the first mentioned northeast corner thereof. No recital of grantors' title appears in this deed.

Subsequently, by deed of 31 March 1819, Elisha S. Warne, abovenamed grantee, with his wife Eliza, being still of Mansfield Township, conveyed to the Reverend Jacob R. Castner^(a) of

(*) The Methodist churchyard. The Presbyterian congregation was not organized in Asbury until 1860.

(a) The Rev. Jacob Randolph Castner, b. 24 July 1785, d. 19 Nov. 1848 near Washington, Warren Co., N.J., son of John Peter and Margaret (Compton) Castner of Liberty Corner, Somerset Co., N.J., having mar. 2 Feb. 1814 Sarah Shafer of Stillwater, N.J., b. 9 Feb. 1795, d. 2 May 1868, and had ten children. (T. F. Chambers, *The Early Germans of N.J.*, 1895, p. 289. Wm. Johnson, *Genealogical Record of the Schaeffer - Shafer Family*, publ. 1907 in *Memoirs.....of Sussex Co., N.J.*, pp. 154, 160-163).

same place, for \$1800, "All that certain house and lot of land.....in the village of Asbury"(b) in said township, describing the same property lines and reciting the deed of 1815 as above abstracted. It is thus evident that a house on

(a) - continued

"Asbury too received preparation for the establishment of a separate Presbyterian organization by the residence here of two of the ablest and most influential men that the Presbytery of Newton has ever had the honor to enroll.....the Rev. Jacob R. Castner and the Rev. James Lewers, both of whose homes were here,Of Jacob Castner it has been said: 'He was a natural orator and one of the best if not the very best extempore speakers in the Presbytery or Synod. He was an able, laborious and successful minister of the Word. An early and fearless champion of the temperance reformation, he probably did more for that cause than any other man in the Presbytery.'" etc. (J. P. Snell, History of Sussex and Warren Counties, New Jersey, 1881, p. 706).

Jacob R. Castner, born at Liberty Corner, New Jersey, pursued his classical studies at Princeton, and studied theology under Dr. Finley at Basking Ridge. German Valley, Fox Hill and Black River were the first fields of his labor. He was pastor of Mansfield from 1818 until his death, which occurred suddenly at Washington (Warren Co.) April 26, 1848. (etc.) The Mansfield Presbyterian Church, incorporated 1822, formerly Mansfield-Woodhouse Presbyterian Congregation, was renamed in 1877, The First Presbyterian Church of Washington, N. J. The original building of 1739-1744 in Mansfield Twp., was rebuilt of stone and was still standing when succeeded by the brick one of 1837 in the village of Washington, then in same Twp. This building was burned down in 1862, rebuilt in 1863-64, and remained standing in 1881. (Snell, cited above, p. 568).

(b) Warren County, "Asbury, a flourishing village on the Musconetcong Creek, about a mile from the base of the Musconetcong mountains and 12 miles from Belvidere, in a fertile limestone valley, contains 2 stores, 1 plaster,

this lot existed in 1815 and that an addition was made to it before 1819, as both the mention thereof and the difference in prices in these two deeds indicate. This refers to the frame wing at the rear and to the main brick unit before it, respectively.

A half acre lot lying next northward on the road was added to his lot by Mr. Castner's purchase thereof from Cornelius Stewart and wife Elizabeth, all of Mansfield Township, for \$110, by deed of 31 March 1835. And, by his deed of 29 March 1838, he, the Rev. Jacob R. Castner, and his wife Sarah, of Mansfield Township, Warren County, conveyed to John Wyckoff of same place, for \$1160, these two adjacent lots, apparently to remove himself nearer his church lately relocated and erected in the village of Washington, some six miles northeast of Asbury. The reduction of \$750 in his selling price from his total purchasing prices appears to preclude Mr. Castner as the builder of the front (brick) unit of the house here considered.

From this John Wyckoff and wife Mary, of Franklin Twp.*, the same one acre lot passed to William Richey of same place by deed of 13 January 1842 for \$1100, and from Richey and wife to Augustus J. Richey, also of Franklin Twp., by deed of 21 February 1846 for \$1400. The last named and his wife Anna G. Richey conveyed it to Theodore F. Hoffman on 22 March 1856, with a half acre lot at the

(b) continued

1 saw, 1 fulling, and 2 grist mills, a woolen factory, several mechanics, a Methodist church and about 40 dwellings. In olden times, there was a grist mill on the north side of the creek and a dwelling on the site of Van Antwerp's mill; and the place was called Hall's Mills. In 1800 the cornerstone of the Old Methodist Episcopal Church was laid by the venerable Bishop Asbury, in honour of whom this village received its name. (Barber & Howe, Historical Collections of the State of New Jersey, 1844, p. 488).

* Franklin Twp., which includes the village of Asbury, was created from parts of Greenwich, Mansfield, and Oxford Twps. 1839.

rear, for \$3000. He, being of Union Twp., Hunterdon County, in turn conveyed the house and the lot as then enlarged to $2\frac{1}{2}$ acres to Aaron Van Syckle of that place for the same price by deed of 8 November 1861, and the latter, still of Union Township and so not occupying this house in Asbury, passed title to Martin Wyckoff of Flemington by deed of 24 March 1862 for \$2400.

From Martin Wyckoff and his wife Caroline, of the village of Asbury (and evidently then occupying this house) it passed to Isaac Smith, a farmer of Franklin Township (in which the village lies) by deed of 17 October 1864 at \$2800. He moved into the house and died there in 1903, whereupon the property descended to his two daughters Laura M. and Sara E. Smith, of whom the former survives as sole owner and occupant at the time of our survey, July 1941. She repeats tradition that the east end addition was made for a lawyer's office. This was evidently done by Augustus J. Richey, the owner from 1846 to 1856, in which years the selling price advanced from \$1400 to \$3000.

Reference:

Search of title in land and probate records of Warren County by James Hanlon, H.A.B.S. abstractor, reported 22 July 1941, and in those of Sussex County by Supervising Historian reported 16 October 1941

Lewis D. Cook
Supervising Historian 17 October 1941

Approved:

Seymour Williams
SEYMOUR WILLIAMS, F.A.I.A.
District Officer